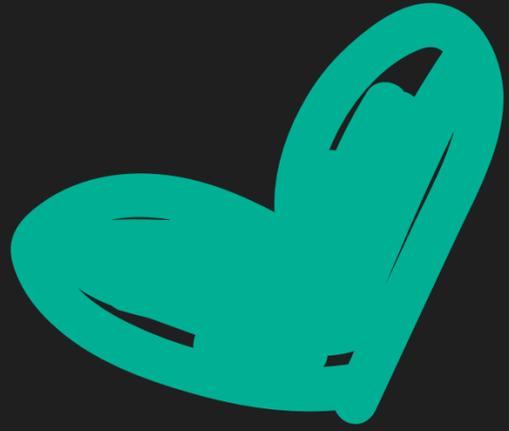




Youth Power in Focus





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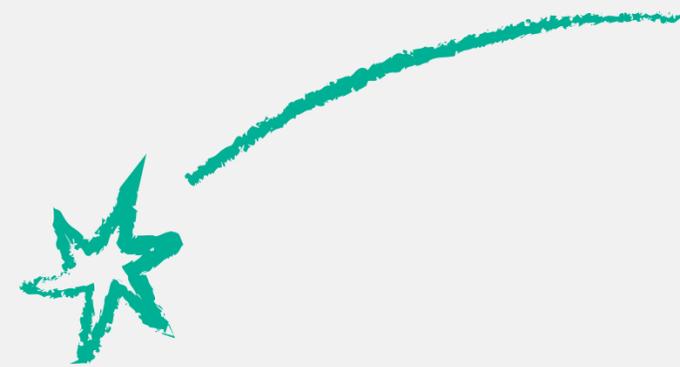


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ABOUT CHEVS

CHEVS is a hub for queer youth activism in Africa. We mobilise, support, and amplify the voices and agency of young LGBTIQ+ persons and organisations in Africa. CHEVS was founded in 2019 as a bold and essential endeavour to close the gap in youth leadership and collaboration among African LGBTIQ+ youths. The absence of real youth leadership and representation, particularly within the larger movement, was a source of frustration for the young LGBTIQ+ Activists who sought to belong and because they matter.

We have grown exponentially since then and continue to work with LGBTIQ+ youths to develop innovative and radical strategies for empowering queer youths across Africa as well as platforms that allow them to engage actively and have an authentic voice in the fight for queer liberation.

Our staff and board is made up of young queer feminist activists, scholars and experts from across the West African Sub-continent.

**In the pursuit of our vision we are guided by the voices,
ideals and agency of young queer Africans.**

Our Vision

To create a west African society where everyone has equal access to health and human rights irrespective of Gender, Sexuality, age, and social status.

Our Mission

To accelerate social inclusion and rights for sexual and gender minorities.



Our work is organised under four strategic pillars;

Building movement power



We are building a strong foundation that will foster solidarity across country youth movements through conscious organising and capacity building.

Transforming power Relations



We co-create and amplify collective advocacy voices to express ourselves and participate in political spaces where decisions that affect us are being made; we challenge and disrupt the exercise of unchecked power and hold public and private bodies to account.

Reimagining movement resourcing

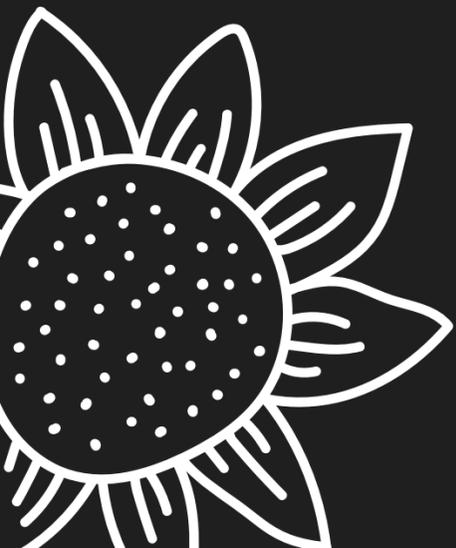


We advocate for more and better resources, funding mechanisms and equitable engagements with and for our diverse communities of young persons.

Visibility and Expression



Live and let live—this mantra stays with us. We enforce the reality of freedom-as-a-right for women, girls, LGBTQI+ and sex workers and more so the freedom of expression.



Thematic Areas

- ♥ Sexual and reproductive health and rights/Justice
- ♥ Advancing Human rights and justice for LGBTIQ+ persons
- ♥ Economic development/justice
- ♥ Safety and Security

Message from CHEVS

CHEVS' origin story is a mosaic of resistance which can not be pieced without recognizing the persistence of young people that made it possible. Our story is about the moments, voices and activists who have contributed to the actualization of the CHEVS we manifest today, and the power we share as a movement by and for young queer Africans.

We hold 'youth' as a politic, not just as a label.

Many institutions co-opt the label of youth led or youth serving organisations, but behind the label are agendas lacking transformative leadership approaches and accountability to young people.

We mobilise and amplify voices of diverse communities of young people as well as explore advocacy opportunities for meaningful youth inclusion, and we are unapologetic in the values and ideologies that motivate us.

In these times, actions must align with principles, and organising needs to happen in ways that challenge barriers and systems that make it hard for youth-led movements and activists to thrive. This is why we need to pay attention to our institutional practices and culture both as community organisations and funders.

Wading the waters

As youth leaders, our experiences have been like a hurdle race. There have been obstacles which we have crossed and bars which we have raised. Far from smooth, it has been a ride with moments of pausing, dancing, bursting into songs and re-strategizing,

When we first finalised our strategic plan—one that would direct our work within the West African subcontinent—I felt the weight of what was to come. In the evening of that day, I sat down and wrote in my diary, 'It takes a collective.'

2022 was that year of extending bridges to reach more communities across our work.

***It was the year we nurtured ourselves in learning and reflection!
on what it truly means to build power with and for young queer
Africans in decolonized ways.***

It was the year we recognized and fully acknowledged that the solutions we need will not come from the existing systems and practices that fail to see the power of young people but only as 'beneficiaries'.



We began the year with fear and anxiety as we had just experienced a major attack in late 2021. Documents and office equipment were destroyed, and staff members who were present at the time of the attack were arbitrarily arrested. Yet, reassuring and supporting each other through these moments of fear in January was the work that made the most sense to do. The challenge of navigating our current context is in itself our greatest act of resistance. We adopted remote working and leveraged virtual technology to continue to connect and hold each other as well as plan our year. It was in this year that began with uncertainties that we grew from an ambitious team of four to a great team of eight and had our first in-person staff retreat. 2022 was also our first year of expanding the frontiers of our work to other West African countries such as Gambia and Liberia. CHEVS developed a West African Strategic Agenda which will build power with and for young queer Africans.

In this year, we dreamed to raise critical consciousness on issues that are important to our movement and with the Support of ISDAO, we participated in the African conference on sexual health and rights in Sierra Leone and organised our first ever conference side event titled 'Feminist Action on LGBTQI rights'. Gathering with other young, queer feminist activists, we dreamed and aspired on what an inclusive feminist movement would look like. This conscious and inspired exchange birthed our call to feminist actions.

I am delighted to share that CHEVS has continued to grow in both reach and impact. We are able to reach young LGBTQI people, more than ever before, providing them with the support, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive. Our advocacy efforts have also gained significant traction, as we have worked with partners to ensure that the needs, agency and voices of young LGBTQI persons are amplified, heard and implemented.

One of the most significant challenges we faced in 2022 was the volatility of funds available to us. However, we adapted and continued to provide essential support to fellow young, queer Africans. I am proud of what we achieved in 2022 despite the hurdles. We remain committed to our mission as we continue to dream a West African society where everyone has equal access to health and human rights irrespective of gender, sexuality, age and social status.

The following pages tell the story of our 2022, but the story itself is not as linear as it appears on the pages as these moments were full of learning-by-doing for the CHEVS team, and we are happy to share them with you.

As we unravel this story of becoming, we invite you to witness the incredible impact that can be achieved when young people are at the forefront of change.

With Youth Power in Focus we recognize the dynamic and unique perspectives that young queer Africans bring to the table, like sparks igniting a wildfire of transformation. It is about watching the waves of change we create and being inspired to take your own steps with us towards a brighter, more inclusive West Africa. It is a celebration of the boundless potential that lies within every young queer African to be fully and unapologetically who they are. It is an invitation to join us on this extraordinary journey.

Justin Chidozie
Executive Director



HIGHLIGHT OF IMPACT AND ACHIEVEMENT



201 youths trained

We trained and offered direct support to youth activists and organisations through our capacity-building initiatives like the Asanka digital advocacy fellowship, Tech4Pride initiative and a series of training on Human rights mechanisms and engagement with treaty bodies.



97 Therapy Sessions

We provided psychosocial support and therapy to 97 queer youths who presented cases of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance addiction etc through our digital counselling platform



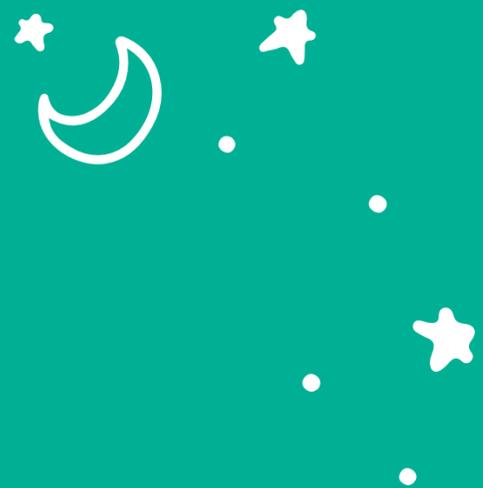
30 Emergency response support

We offered emergency assistance to young LGBTQI rights defenders and organisations in the form of legal support in response to arbitrary arrest, temporary relocation due to exposure to danger as well as health care support.

Resources

We launched a major directory of healthcare facilities that provide stigma-free and gender-affirming health services to LGBTQI persons across Nigeria, a first of its kind. We also developed and launched our West African Strategic Agenda.

Sincerely CHEVS



BUILDING MOVEMENT POWER

Unapologetically Queer



3

Our stories are the heartbeat of our movement. They resonate with the power of our shared humanity and validate our experiences. Through our voices, we reclaim our narratives. Our language is a powerful tool that brings visibility to the struggles, resilience, and aspirations of queer youths.

Communication and media are the paintbrushes we use to create a diverse mural of queer experiences, representing the resilience, strength, and unity across our community.

The Asanka Media Fellowship was CHEVS' response to the call to strengthen the power of storytelling in the queer youth movement.

We recognised the pervasive misrepresentation of LGBTQI+ lives media and the distorted portrayals that fuel harmful stereotypes, perpetuating discrimination and inequality. It became our priority to address this because **our visibility and our story is our power.**

The Asanka Media Fellowship positioned the media as a potent instrument to counteract these negative narratives. By purpose, the fellowship would inspire and drive authentic representation.



We sought out, identified, and cultivated Programs and Communication Officers from vibrant youth-led LGBTQ+ organisations across West Africa. Through a transformative journey, they acquired essential skills and honed their craft in strategic and effective communication. The Fellowship's guiding principle was clear:

advocacy necessitates a deft touch in harnessing the power of words, a delicate dance of persuasion and storytelling.

The fellowship's training also covered issues in digital safety and security, arming the fellows with the digital tools that improve safety as they champion their cause in a criminalised setting. It also explored narrative ownership and the intricate frameworks surrounding hate speech—an important context necessary for understanding the nuanced interplay of communication while working in a hostile environment.

Emerging as torchbearers of change and armed with a potent combination of skills, knowledge and resilience, our fellows embraced the mission to challenge the boundaries of acceptance and inclusivity; to strive for social desensitisation, narrative transformation and the integration of LGBTQ+ stories into the fabric of society.

Bridging the Gap between Tech and Queer Youths

We often find ourselves facing digital disenfranchisement as queer youths. This restricts our economic potential and contributes to heightened poverty levels within the community. Amidst widespread homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, it became important for us to seize the opportunities offered by decentralised work in the technology sector.

CHEVS launched the TECH4PRIDE project in 2022 to address the digital/economic disparities experienced by queer youths. By providing comprehensive tech education and skills development, we enabled our community to venture into tech spaces, equipped with the tools to navigate the landscape of growth and advancement that the tech industry offers. Besides this, it was also our strategy to augment the representation of queer youths in the IT sector, enabling our communities to utilise information technology as a powerful tool for advocacy in the pursuit of decriminalisation of LGBTQI+ identities in Nigeria.

The curriculum encompassed an array of transformative courses from web development and data analysis to graphic design, UI/UX, and copywriting.

CHEVS' TECH4PRIDE project is an unyielding advocacy statement standing as a powerful protest against the status quo. While the African Union's Digital Transformation Policy espouses the noble goal of achieving digital inclusion for every African by 2030, it falls short in providing concrete action plans for LGBTQI+ individuals. This glaring omission calls for a comprehensive review of existing policies and programs to ensure the inclusion of LGBTQI+ persons within the tech ecosystem.



It was an opportunity for me to go into an area of tech that really mattered to me. These months of intensive studies and learning have been worth it and absolutely enlightening. My mentor was welcoming, and empathetic. — Charles, Graphic Design Mentee

Critical questions arise:

- Where do these policies and programs provide for LGBTQI+ individuals?
- What is the funding landscape like for engaging LGBTQI+ communities in the tech sector across Africa?
- And just how exclusionary is the tech ecosystem for LGBTQI+ individuals in the region?

TECH4PRIDE is an example of how intentional interventions bridge the digital divide and enable queer youths to thrive in the technology space. It is a call to action, urging stakeholders to recognize the importance of representation, access, and equity within the tech ecosystem. By creating an environment that embraces diversity and champions LGBTQI+ voices, we forge a path toward a more inclusive digital future that truly leaves no one behind.

An Oasis of Love and Healing: The Joyful Revolution of the Igberaga Circle

“I had a terrible homophobic attack sometime in 2017. I was depressed and even contemplated taking my life. It lingered for years. I couldn’t share my experience with anyone including my friends. Carrying this in mind all these years affected my productivity and my life in general. We had an opportunity to share our experiences in one of the safe space programs. I was motivated to share my experience after hearing others tell their own stories. I can say I am better now and I wish to have a community gathering like this often.” —Emeka



“I always looked forward to attending the monthly safe space program. I was invited by a colleague and every second of the experience was worth it. I thought it was a one-off event, but I was told I could attend the same event next month. It was beautiful having people like you in the same room talking about what you are going through and giving you possible remedies for it.” —Victor



Plagued by violent systemic oppression, legal barriers, and relentless societal prejudice as queer youths, we find ourselves deprived of vital social spaces to connect, engage, and truly be ourselves. This exposes our communities to heightened risks of mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse and related conditions. Such adversities dampen our quality of life and undermine our confidence to participate fully in society. At CHEVS, we recognized this urgent need for change, leading us to launch The Igberaga Circle—a monthly gathering that provided sanctuary for healing, restoration and the exchange of valuable insights from our diverse communities.



In the embrace of The Igberaga Circle, healing took centre stage as a revolutionary act, and joy became resistance.



Held on the last Saturday of every month throughout 2022, the Igberaga Circle unfolded an array of activities that nourished our mind, body and spirit. Energising exercises and meditative practices invigorated us while yoga sessions harmonised our beings.

Information exchange sessions served as invaluable platforms for knowledge sharing, arming our community with vital resources and insights. Open dialogues became the heartbeat of our gatherings, creating sacred spaces where individuals shared their lives, their families, their academic journeys, their professional endeavours, their spiritual quests, their relationships, their joys, their fears, and their dreams. The power of these exchanges forged bonds of kinship, instilled a sense of belonging and ignited hope within us.

We understand that providing safe social spaces is not merely an act of kindness—it is a fundamental necessity.

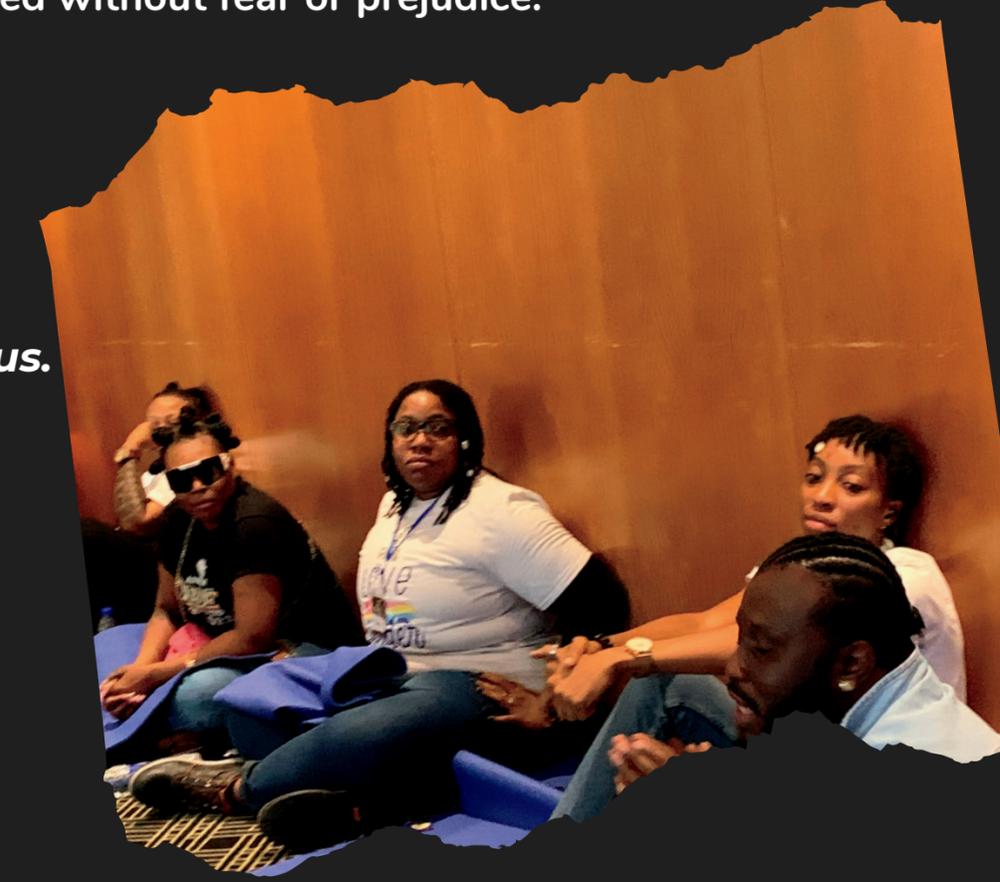
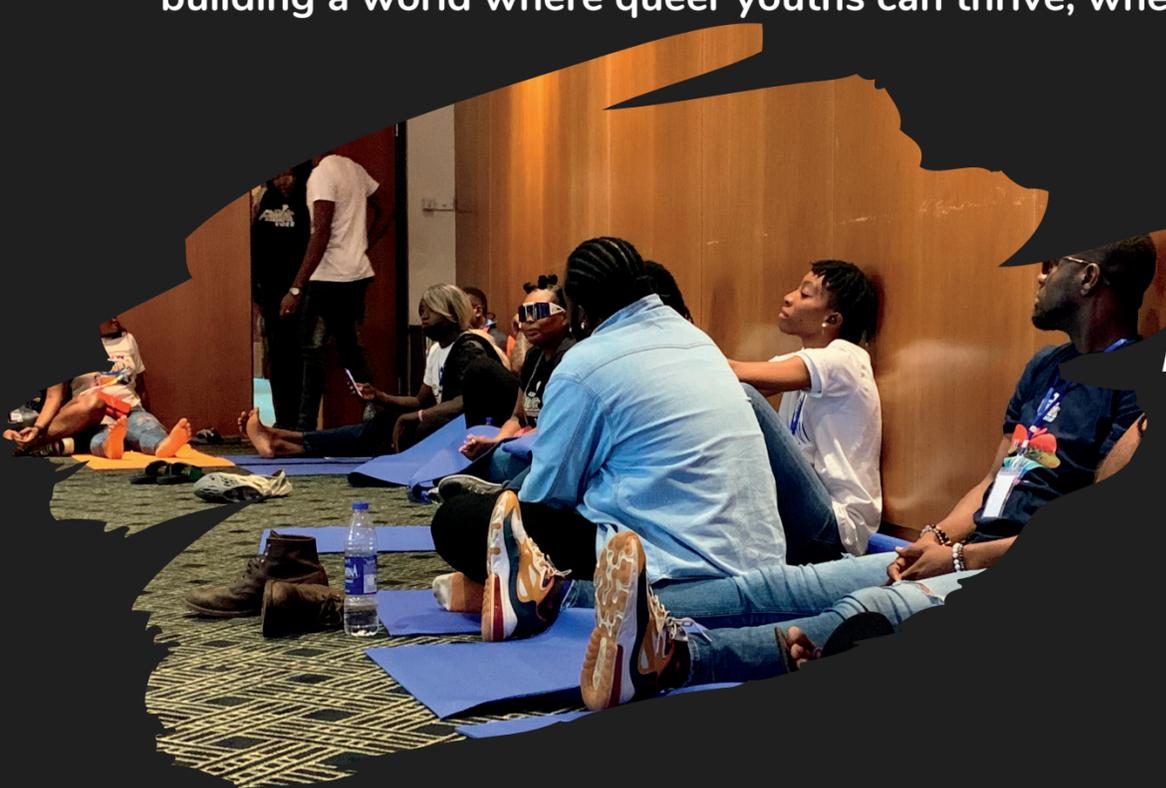


Our collective responsibility to care for one another transcends the mere provision of self-care tips that often place the burden of care solely on the individual. By fostering an inclusive environment free from the shackles of oppression, we are redefining what it means to support stigmatised communities. We are reimagining the possibilities of unity, resilience and collective healing through our commitment to one another.

Our guiding light is our unwavering belief in the transformative power of connection, healing and joy. Together, we stand strong in our commitment to building a world where queer youths can thrive, where our voices are heard, and where our identities are celebrated without fear or prejudice.



***The revolution starts within our hearts,
and the Igberaga Circle is our testament to the
indomitable spirit of resilience and love that propels us.***



Towards Stigma-Free Healthcare: The Equalizer Project

The journey toward equal access to vital HIV testing, treatment, care, and prevention services for gay, bisexual men, and men who have sex with men (GBQMSM) is fraught with social and systemic barriers. Recognizing this, CHEVS launched The Equalizer Project, establishing 16 dynamic support groups across Nigeria. These groups provide a haven and a vital lifeline for GBQMSM individuals living with HIV, offering peer-to-peer psychosocial support and treatment adherence to foster improved well-being and combat stigma.

Central to the project's mission is prioritising the provision of treatment literacy and legal empowerment. Through comprehensive training programs, we equipped healthcare providers with enhanced capacities to administer care that respects the unique needs and experiences of GBQMSM and trans individuals.

The Equalizer Project boldly advocates for a transformative shift in the healthcare landscape by fostering an inclusive and supportive network. Each support group was a sanctuary where GBQMSM individuals living with HIV could find solace, share their stories and uplift one another. The power of peer-to-peer connections in fostering psychosocial support cannot be overstated as it provides a nurturing space for collective healing and treatment adherence. These groups become a catalyst for change, forging a community where resilience and camaraderie thrive amidst the challenges faced by GBQMSM individuals living with HIV.

Our Community's Guide to Inclusive Healthcare in Nigeria

To increase access to healthcare within the LGBTQI+ and sex workers communities, we mapped and published a comprehensive directory of medical institutions offering specialised care for LGBTQI+ individuals in Nigeria. This groundbreaking resource is a vital tool in streamlining access to much-needed healthcare services for our community as it provides clear information on available options and where to get them.

By compiling and presenting this directory, we aim to guide future efforts in the access to inclusive and affirming healthcare services. This endeavour has also sparked a renewed dedication to our research commitments, propelling us in our mission to create and advocate for a more equitable and supportive healthcare landscape for all.

Request for a copy of the directory at [Chevs Report](#)





TRANSFORMING POWER RELATIONS



In pursuit of human rights protection and advocacy in 2022, CHEVS amplified its presence in policy-making spaces, confronting human rights violations head-on and actively engaging with key human rights mechanisms to hold state actors accountable. We confronted discrimination at both national and regional levels and equipped community members with the necessary tools and knowledge for effective human rights policy advocacy in support of their activism. Understanding the intricacies of existing international and local laws, ratified human rights treaties and government policies, and localising these legal frameworks became a catalyst for radical change in safeguarding human rights.

Collective Advocacy for Queer Justice

Queer justice is our mission to achieve equality, fairness and dignity for our communities within legal, social and political systems. We challenge and dismantle the systemic discrimination, oppression and violence that queer individuals face based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

The Value Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) stands at the forefront of co-creating and amplifying collective advocacy voices for queer justice. Through grassroots mobilisation and community education, this training fuels social change and fosters a sense of unity among activists.



At VCAT in 2022, young, queer participants explored the intricate realms of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) issues, forging a shared understanding of the legal protections against discrimination. They also explored the profound influence of cultural, religious, and legal frameworks, recognizing how these shape the very fabric of society.

With this shared knowledge, they continued on their journey of engagement with human rights mechanisms, co-creating powerful narratives and amplifying their collective advocacy voices. VCAT is an enabler of activism. It nurtures a vibrant generation of advocates who have joined forces to challenge oppressive practices and reshape the landscape of our society.

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The 10th African Conference on Sexual Health and Rights (ACSHR)

CHEVS facilitated a pivotal movement building engagement focused on intersectional feminism at the 10th ACSHR. Recognizing the alarming exclusion of LGBTQIA+ identities from the feminist discourse, we highlighted the urgency of unity in the struggle for liberation across the African continent. Against the backdrop of escalating violence and hostility faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals from both state and non-state actors, we emphasised the urgent need to combat the resurgence of misogyny and address intersecting human and women's rights. Through our efforts, we successfully championed a resolution to mainstream LBQTI+ rights within the broader women's rights movement in Africa, fostering collective action for the protection of minority rights through the call to feminist Action .

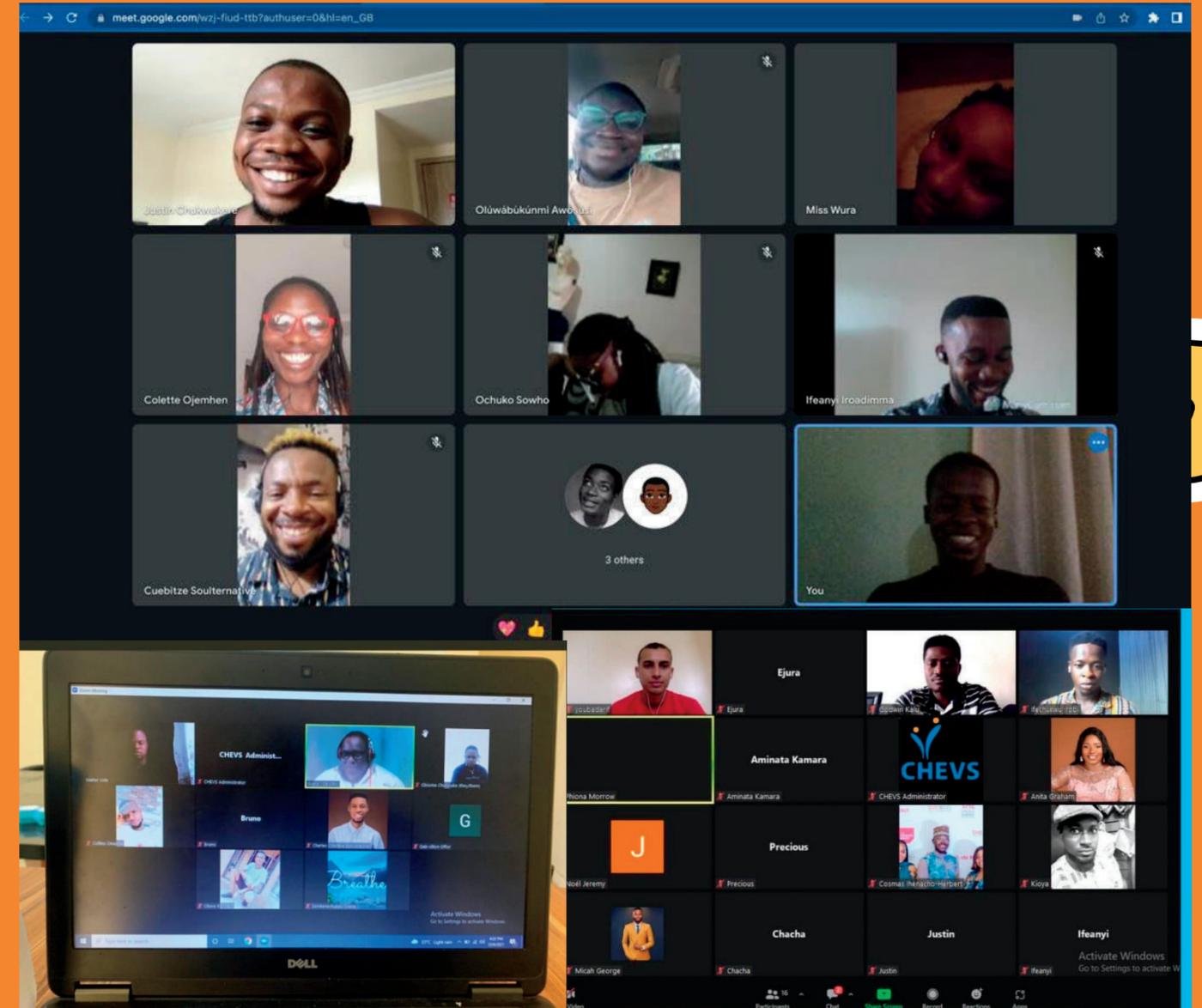


In Digital Queerdom

Virtual spaces have proven to be powerful tools in educating, uniting and mobilising our queer communities toward social change. These digital platforms provide a unique opportunity for queer persons to come together to share their stories and amplify their voices on a global scale. Through online support groups, forums, social media communities, and virtual events. By harnessing the power of technology, the queer community can transcend geographical boundaries to connect with like-minded activists and create a unified front in the fight for queer justice.

Webinars put together by CHEVS' Digital Queerdom reached up to 374 community members, covering issues and topics such as:

- ★ What works to end violence against women and Girls.
- ★ Masculinity as a barrier to mental wellness. Queerness and Mental health.
- ★ Bisexuality: Its nuances and preferences.
- ★ Reimagining spaces for LGBTQ persons in tech.
- ★ Intergenerational Solidarity: Creating a world for all ages.



VISIBILITY AND EXPRESSION

Queer Vibes Only



5

Read4Pride (R4P): Inspiring Pride, Acceptance, and Belonging Through Books

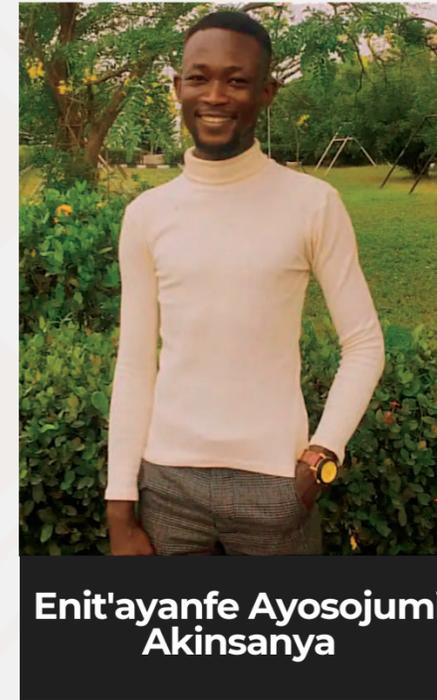
This was an extraordinary journey into literature, where words became catalysts for self-empowerment, acceptance and the celebration of queer identity. With profound belief in the transformative power of books, R4P brought together four exceptional authors:



Unomah Azuah



Chike Frank Edozien



Enit'ayanfe Ayosojumi Akinsanya



Ayodele Olofintuade

These visionary writers, renowned for their remarkable works exploring the diverse tapestry of queer existence in Nigeria, joined forces to engage in soul-stirring book readings and thought-provoking discussions with our LGBTQI+ youth community. Through their poignant narratives that weaved through the intricacies of intersecting identities, coming-of-age experiences, queer bodies, familial bonds and the resilience of survival, these authors illuminated the path toward greater understanding, acceptance and shared humanity. The R4P project also shed light on the pressing importance of representation, documentation and archiving of queer lives and history, serving as an act of defiant resistance against erasure.

By amplifying the voices of LGBTQI+ authors and providing a platform for their stories to be heard, cherished and preserved, R4P cultivated a sense of belonging and validation within our community. With each page turned and every heartfelt conversation sparked, the R4P initiative reminded us of the power of literature to transcend boundaries, ignite change and pave the way for a more inclusive and compassionate society. Together, we embarked on a remarkable journey, united by the shared conviction *that stories hold the key to unlocking understanding, acceptance, and the infinite possibilities of pride.*

Embracing Queer Power at African Pride Accelerated (APA)

LGBTQI+ communities constantly face escalating violations that often go unaddressed, and this is why the human rights landscape is a never ending battleground. The absence of protective laws and ineffective policy implementation further compounds the struggle for human rights accountability. The anti-rights movement relentlessly seeks to erase LGBTQI+ existence from African history, employing heteronormativity as a weapon. In response, collective efforts have intensified, standing as a testament to our unwavering solidarity. Pride is a symbol of our unified interests and a resounding protest, proclaiming that LGBTQI+ individuals are present, proud and never alone.

CHEVS joined forces in 2022 to envision, conceive and execute the African Pride Accelerated. This brought together over 200 activists, organisations and community members from across Nigeria to foster an atmosphere of queer joy and deep conversations on vital community issues. We tackled safety concerns, forged collaborations, resisted police brutality, pursued litigation against SOGIESC violations, evaluated the status of the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act and emphasized the need for a more unified approach to national advocacy. Alongside strategic sessions, we curated dedicated art spaces for healing and rejuvenation and hosted events that celebrated the rich tapestry of queer history within our diverse cultural contexts throughout the country.



We are thankful for partner organisations that worked with us to achieve the dreams of APA 2022 :



Crème De La Crème
House of Fame
Foundation



Women's Health and
Equal Rights Initiative
(WHER)



Wave Makers Initiative
for Health and Youth
Empowerment



Improved Sexual
Health and Rights
Advocacy Initiative
(ISHRAI)



Intersex Nigeria

Equality
Triangle



Initiative for Gender
Equality and Sexual
Reproductive Health
(IGE-SRH)

*Together, we kindle the
flame of queer resilience
and strive for a future where
our voices, rights, and
identities are embraced and
celebrated.*

BUILDING OUR QUEER YOUTH COLLECTIVE



6

As young people organising for young people, we do not just want to enable justice; we want to institutionalise it. This is why systemic change is at the heart of the work we do, and we exemplify this by integrating feminist principles of leadership and learning in our own thinking and culture. By putting a feminist lens to our work, we enable the dismantling of gender bias across the movements we are building, interrogating privilege and speaking truth to power.

Our language continues to evolve to reflect our relationship with the communities of young people we serve. As opposed to empowerment, we have been enabling: we acknowledge that all the young people we serve are equal partners and solution-bearers. We are conscious of how much we can learn from our diverse contexts, and this starts with recognizing that existing limitations aren't a youth power deficiency but are power structures in the society that have historically and continuously oppressed, marginalised and excluded them. Young people, as a community, have power, and we, as young organisers, have taken up the responsibility to enable the actualization of this power.

We grew more conscious of the need to anchor our work in feminist principles. This is why we developed and institutionalised policies addressing employee gender parity in our workplace.



The first step was to build a safe, diverse and inclusive workplace. In 2022, CHEVS created gender-just hiring opportunities that improved female to male staff ratio to 60:40 from 20:80. As accidental as this gap had been, it was evident, and we acknowledged our responsibility to close it. We recognize that a feminist approach is the only way to attain meaningful inclusion and build on our desire for radical transformation.

As in-person staff, we bonded and built friendship values, adopting a co-creation work system. It was common to see us leaving our individual offices to huddle over the conference room table as we co-created. We would bounce ideas, strategize, review documents, and stay connected as we worked. This built our teamwork, eased update processes, enabled transparency and feedback. This was also a healing process for us as individuals. As a part of the communities we serve, we understood the trauma we were coming from and the challenge of continually reliving this trauma through our work. Working together in the same physical space was collective care built on solidarity.

We continued to decolonize our workspace as we transitioned from in-person to remote work in 2022, interrogating our work dynamics to identify unequal power relations.

We understood that, depending on our work culture and priorities, this transition could pose more barriers or be an opportunity for growth. We asked ourselves some questions:

- ♥ What would virtual work mean for our existing staff of people with different digital literacy levels?
- ♥ How would we sustain a virtual workspace that would be effective, empowering and accessible for all with our limited experience as a team?
- ♥ What will staffing look like, across the region, with work expanding beyond Nigeria?

Engaging in feedback and critical evaluations, we identified the gaps and limitations of the digital tools and platforms we wanted to use, addressing how they might marginalise our voices. Some of these gaps were our different degrees of knowledge and capacities to use specific digital tools, language/access barriers when engaging with the community virtually and the different paces we each had when working through digital platforms.

In response, we upskilled our capacities and developed safeguards for equitable access in our virtual organising. We went a step further to identify the individual and group opportunities we could harness through team feedback.

At the beginning of 2022, it was deeply clear to us that we needed to rethink values, rethink strategy and restructure CHEVS for a more meaningful impact. We realised that every challenge we have overcome up to this point has led us to and prepared us for the expansion we would experience. We started by listening to the heart of the organisation –the community we serve–through continuous learning and interaction.



We mapped new territories of action and identified intersectional justice points across movements for young people. There was clarity on the need to leverage our collective interventions and harness the power to radicalise and accelerate systemic change. We saw how our work will bridge the gap between intergovernmental and grassroots spaces in West Africa: we would facilitate stronger foundations and foster solidarity that will enable intersectional action across LGBTQI+ movements in the region. This clarity birthed the development and implementation of our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, officially shifting our work into four pillars centred around movement building and positioning CHEVS as a regional organisation. Currently, our Strategic Plan implementation covers Ghana, Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, with the goal of covering and synergizing work in the entire region in the near future.

Building Systemic Resilience

As part of our transitions in 2022, we reviewed our workplace policies to make provisions for radical rest, mental health and wellness leave, abortion and maternity leaves. We recognize that the normalisation of healthy workplace culture is paramount to our work as an organisation.

Building our queer youth hub is a story of consciously coming into self through intentional practice of principles that reflect who we are. We innovate our work through feminist principles and practices, and by adapting our priorities to the needs of the communities we serve.

What did building our hub teach us?

Inclusion is an Action Word

As young people who are organising to eradicate different layers of injustice on marginalised communities, inclusion is an action word for us—not a buzzword. To mainstream and ultimately achieve equity justice, we will drive inclusion not just by ourselves, but by other actors. This will include collaborations with our stakeholders and other justice activists to intentionally spotlight inclusion as a process for every project we work on.

We are Our Values

As we transformed our work model, diversified our projects and expanded the team, we committed to embodying all that is just and fair and to see this reflected through our people. We wanted to limit burnout and avoid discrimination while building a safe space where we could bring our humanity to work. Throughout the year, as we reviewed what matters to us, we learned how to allow our values to shape our practices, our commitment, our dedication and our ultimate joy.

Remote Work: Opportunity or Setback?

As CHEVS' work and team expanded, we experienced a spike in targeted hate crime that necessitated the adoption of a remote work system. Looking from the outside-in, this should be an easy transition, but as young queer organisers situated in a hostile environment, our context of work differs. This transition was scary at first, then challenging. It was a rude shift that came with the potent fear of isolation. But as a team that prioritised open, safe spaces, we learned to give voice to our fears; we acknowledged that this fear existed; we vocalised it.

This led us to create virtual work processes that would ensure we could still work in different spaces without breaking our bonds. We began a weekly virtual meetup where for two hours, we talked about everything except work. We shared our lives, our joys, our struggles, supporting and uplifting each other. Beyond the bonding experience, this collective care strategy has become an important activity for our mental health as a team.

Despite working from different locations, a culture of respect guides our digital engagements. Accountability to one's self and to team members while learning from every project has improved the quality of work we do.



Building our queer youth hub has been a lesson in how to nurture safe spaces for everyone to lead and follow simultaneously; it is a lesson in how to share power equitably while ensuring responsible and transparent use. A culture of mutual ownership has resulted from our collaborative process, encouraging more lead-taking in the workspace.

Living feminist principles in the workplace has also improved our physical and mental wellbeing, making us more aware, compassionate, and supportive as a team, taking cognizance of intersectional realities that might have escaped our notice before. We are better informed to identify the needs of those most affected by multiple forms of discrimination internally and externally.

We have found a rhythm and look forward to getting better as we grow.



Describing Our Queer Youth Hub in One Word



We asked the powerhouse of CHEVS—the people who make our work possible—to describe, in one word, their experience of the queer youth hub we have co-created.



'Amazing'.

Working with CHEVS gives me fulfilment, autonomy and access to learning opportunities. There is always something new to learn or experience with every project. There is intentional effort to keep the power dynamic at play equitable and healthy. We know that we are young people who don't know it all, but we are challenging our boundaries of knowledge every day. It's incredible that I get to do this type of work here in Nigeria.

————— **ESTHER - Program officer SRHRJ**



'Interesting.'

As a mental health therapist, working at CHEVS gives me the unique opportunity and platform to offer my service directly to the people who need it. This means a lot to me because as a community of people experiencing a lot of discrimination, I know how limited access to mental health services is. There are also opportunities for exchange of learning across teams. We understand that everything we do is geared towards the same goal, so we work like a family. I really love it here and I always look forward to that feeling of satisfaction after the successful completion of any task.

————— **CHARLES - Programs officer health and wellness**



'Learning'.

Learning is central to the work we do as young people at CHEVS. We are a group bursting with passion and eagerness to go out there and make a significant impact. This is why I keyed into the knowledge exchange opportunities when the organisation prioritised a participatory approach to leadership and decision making. I have gained a lot of knowledge from my colleagues over the years and have been able to access resources from other organisations in the space because I work with CHEVS. Through my role, I have built strategic relationships between the organisation and key stakeholders. I wasn't quite sure I could proficiently handle this at the beginning. As someone who has been with CHEVS from inception, I can testify that we have been intentional about building a liberating and empowering work culture. We require of ourselves to humanise the people we work with and the programs we work on.

————— **JUSTIN - Executive Director**



'Real'.

In my first month at CHEVS, a lot of projects were ongoing and as a remote staff, I faced the challenge of having a very short onboarding process. It was hands-on and fast-paced, and I had to hit the ground running. At first, I was scared but the way the team communicated helped me adjust. Even as a new member of staff, I felt free enough to talk about concerns and challenges, knowing that they wouldn't be dismissed. The organisation listens. That very month, there were conversations for capacity training. And just like that, I had access to so many resources that I needed. I enjoy being a part of this community of young people who truly believe in what they are doing.

————— **ENE - Communications lead**

‘Illuminating’.

When I joined CHEVS, there was more focus on work around the community of gay men but over time, I’ve watched the organisation evolve to radically ensure inclusion of women, transgender and nonbinary persons, making an effort to balance out the divide. Becoming a more feminist organisation was a bit difficult at first because we didn’t know how-to, but working with the right people has created that access. Our work is more fulfilling now and I enjoy learning about the realities of other communities here with us.

————— **IFECHUKWU - Programs officer Human rights**

‘Experience’.

Before CHEVS, I had never worked in the development space. It was as much a learning process as it was work. I had to learn the right language and terminologies, the right work processes and there was plenty of drafting of documents. Back then, everyone had their office. We would come in to work in the morning and walk into our offices, until one morning when we had staff training in the conference room. After the training, everyone remained seated because we loved the way we had engaged in one space. It became our culture as we spent more time working together in the conference room. Everything was happening as we were figuring it out, and there was no need for the delays that came with bureaucracy. This redefined access for me.

————— **WALTER - Programs Officer - community engagement**

‘Privileged’.

For a while, I have read and heard about feminist principles, but for the first time, I have experienced it in practice at CHEVS. I consider it a privilege to witness firsthand how applying feminist principles impact our projects, the way we interact with each other and in the way we review issues. As a lawyer, I have enjoyed combining my legal expertise to my advocacy role, imbibing the organisation’s core values around intersectionality and diversity. I like that most of the knowledge we apply to work is not just professional expertise, but also from the lived experience of our lives. We tend to work from our safe spaces, and this helps us acknowledge and create safe spaces for others.

————— **VALENTINE - Advocacy officer**

‘Fulfilling’.

Working at CHEVS means freedom. I get to work with very talented young people committed to making the world we live in better, and it’s been interesting seeing everyone’s selflessness. Each time I go into the field for work, I am always moved by the passion from the community. There is always an eagerness to be a part of what we are doing, and I like that we keep adapting to lessons learnt from these engagements. As finance officer, I am happy that our budget is growing to accommodate a fair percentage of the projects we have designed, and that there is also a gradual shift from short-term to longer term funding that will enable us to design more sustainable projects.

————— **IFEANYI - Finance Officer**

‘Exciting’.

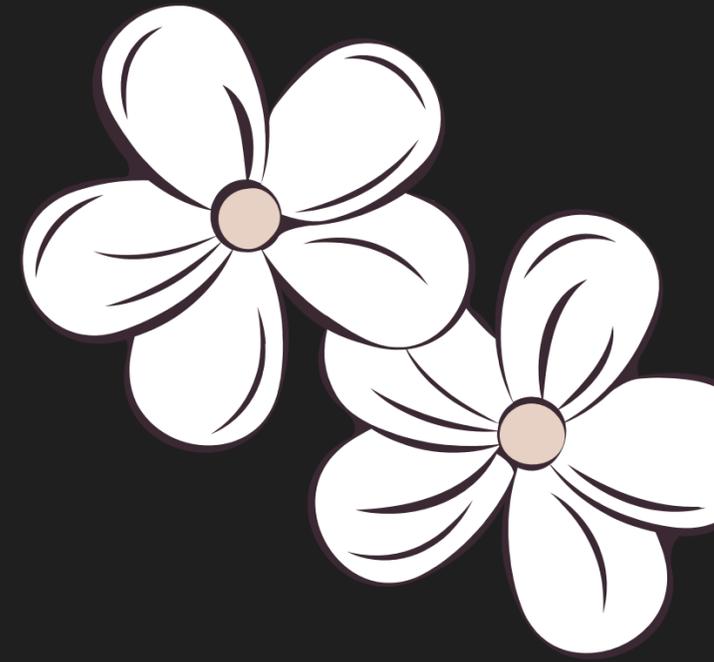
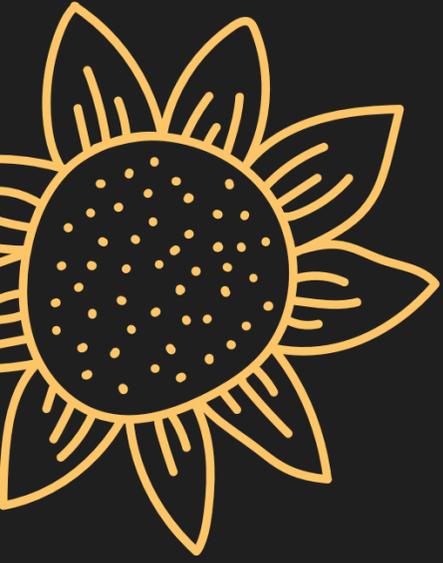
Working in an environment where you actually like your colleagues is a flex; our relationship brought me out of my shell. There are always opportunities for self-development. Criticism is always constructive and for someone as reserved as I am, it’s noteworthy that I grew comfortable enough to draw myself out of my shell. Contributing to work that matters is very important to me, and my best part of working at CHEVS has been contributing to knowledge by putting out educational content. I am always excited to put in my best work because I understand how vital knowledge sharing is.

————— **EJURA - Communications officer**

‘Thrilling’.

There is a sense of community with the work we do, and when it comes to being a feminist organisation, CHEVS walks the talk—this is evident in the successes we have recorded. There is a fluidity to how we work. As staff, we do not have the fear of failure or anxiety from trying. We practise an open communication work culture and one of the things we have done is learn and recognize how hierarchical systems of power exist and how we can avoid it. We recognize that we are all leaders and followers, so everyone gets equal rights to contribute, question and create according to our responsibilities. Progress at this level as a young person is hard to come by in a lot of organisations. I’m glad I found the right fit.

————— **ANITA - Programmes lead**



REFLECTIONS, LESSONS AND THE FUTURE



One of our learning outcomes for 2022 was the necessity to review our feedback mechanisms and improve the way we listen to the communities we serve. This meant bridging communication divides and erecting structures for easy access. This was done by increasing our one-on-one feedback assessments with young persons across communities. Assessing needs for our programming became a priority, shaping our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning practices.

What we learnt

- ◆ Needs, language and access are continually changing within the communities we serve and to effectively do the work we do, we need to adapt to these changes and evolve with the space.
- ◆ There is power in practising collective care.
- ◆ Safeguard policies are important for us as an organisation and for the communities we engage with.
- ◆ There is power in mobilising as a collective as opposed to working in silos.
- ◆ We must continually interrogate our processes, identifying and addressing exclusionary tendencies.
- ◆ We must continue to learn the best practices for deconstructing colonial systems, including language that defines our Pan-African communities.



Power of The Collective

Our movement building commits to engaging power holders in addressing the thematic areas we work on to effect social change and inclusion across West Africa. Beyond the LGBTQI+ and Sex Workers actors, we are collaborating with allies and building networks for more partnerships to further our cause. Intersectional justice requires the diverse justice actors—beyond LGBTQI+ youths—spread across these intersections to collaborate. By working together, we can build on our efforts, repurpose resource mobilisation and distribution, amplify our voices and work to achieve a world of zero discrimination and marginalisation. We believe in the power of the collective and will build on the momentum we achieved in 2022 to accelerate the eradication of inequalities.



How Does Our Future Look?

- ★ We will keep improving our organisational culture.
- ★ We will continue to build an ecosystem for feminist transformation.
- ★ We will expand our relationship with decision-makers and justice rights holders, contributing to policy reforms and implementations.
- ★ We will consolidate internal and external communications to repurpose our messaging.
- ★ We will keep fulfilling our mission to eradicate inequalities in our world.

Our Team



Anita Graham -
Programme Lead



Esther Ezem -
Programme Associate



Justin Chidozie -
Executive Director



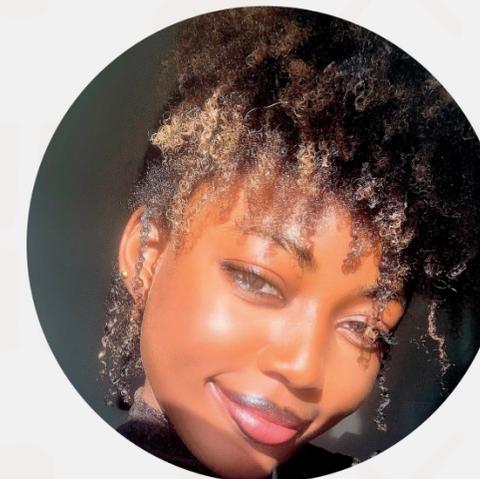
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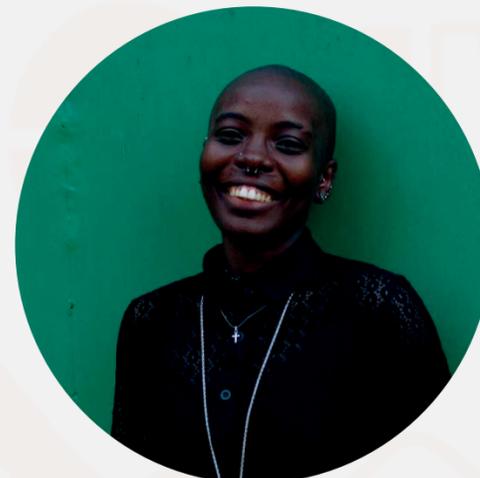
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Gratitude

CHEVS works in partnership with feminist and activist led funds who fuel our resistance, whom we are deeply proud to partner.



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